

The Effectiveness of a Guided Inductive Approach to Teaching English Grammar: First and Second Conditionals 英語文法教育における誘導的帰納法の有効性：仮定法現在・過去

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Abstract: This paper reports on an attempt to prove the effectiveness of a guided inductive approach to teaching English grammar. Previous research has produced conflicting evidence on the benefits of deductive versus inductive approaches to teaching grammar to English second and foreign language learners. This study comprised of one low intermediate level adult learner being taught the first and second conditionals through a guided inductive approach across four weekly one-hour sessions. The pre and post test results showed a 20% increase in the student's ability to use the conditionals correctly. The student stated that she found the treatment useful in increasing her comprehension and knowledge of the target grammar structures. She also said that she wished to continue receiving this method of instruction in the future. These results indicate this approach can be used to teach certain grammar structures. Further research is required to support the benefits of this approach compared to more traditional deductive approaches to teaching.

Keywords: guided inductive approach, teaching grammar, Socratic questioning

要旨: この論文は英語の文法を教えるにあたって、誘導的帰納法の有効性を証明している。第二および外国語学習者に英語文法を教える際、演繹的手法と帰納的手法を使うことに関して、それぞれに相反するメリットが得られていた。本稿では、中級下レベルの成人英語学習者一名に週 1 時間ずつ、4 週間に渡って誘導的帰納法を用いて仮定法現在と仮定法過去を教えたら、学習前と後では仮定法テストの正解率が 20 パーセント上がったという結果が得られた。学習者は文法を学ぶ際に誘導的帰納法は便利であり、今後もこのような方法で勉強したいと話していた。この結果から、教える文法によっては、誘導的機能法は有効な教授法であると証明されたが、今後は以前から使われている演繹的手法と比較した場合でも果たして有効かを調べていく必要があるだろう。

キーワード: 誘導的帰納法、文法教授、ソクラテスの発問

1. Introduction

“From a social constructivist perspective, interaction between the language learner and the expert instructor is essential for learning to occur.” (Vogel, Herron, Cole & York, 2011, p354). A guided inductive approach to grammar teaching requires the instructor and language learner to engage in discussion and work collaboratively to find the

connections between form and meaning, which make the grammar rules clear.

Distinctions have been drawn between explicit and implicit linguistic learning. Explicit knowledge could be described as one's knowledge about the language and its rules, whereas implicit knowledge is that which can be used automatically and spontaneously in language tasks. Second language acquisition has been proposed to benefit from some explicit teaching of forms, this is the Strong Interface Position (Ellis, 2006; Norris and Ortega, 2000). On the other hand proponents of the No Interface Position, such as Stephen Krashen (1981), hypothesize that explicit instruction cannot be converted to explicit knowledge, and proponents of the Weak Interface position, such as Rod Ellis (1994), suggest doing so is very difficult. Therefore, it might be proposed that a middle ground between explicit and implicit learning could most benefit learners. Learners, whenever possible, should be guided to discover the rules of language for themselves.

There are varying degrees of explicit instruction, the most explicit being a deductive approach, whereby the rule is explained to the learner. Another subcategory of explicit instruction is inductive. Inductive instruction exposes the learner to language use allowing them to directly attend to particular forms and has them attempt to make metalinguistic generalizations by themselves (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Inductive could be seen as a less explicit teaching approach than deductive.

This study attempted to further prove a guided inductive approach can be successfully utilized to assist in second language grammar acquisition. In this case study a guided inductive approach (including the use of Socratic questioning) was used to assist an adult Japanese English Foreign Language learner of intermediate English ability to acquire the grammatical structures of the first and second conditionals. Conditionals are particularly difficult for learners to acquire due to their syntactic complexity.

2. Literature Review

I will review past research relating to how language learners acquire language and research, which denotes the success of an inductive consciousness-raising approach (such as Focus on Form), in comparison to more traditional explicit teaching methods (such as Focus on FormS and deductive learning techniques, with regards to giving the learning lasting comprehension of the grammatical structure and its meaning and correct usage.

Research has produced conflicting evidence on the effectiveness of deductive and inductive instruction. Vogel et al. (2011) found a significantly greater effect for the guided inductive approach on short-term learning. Guided meaning that the instructor assists the learner to find the connections between form and meaning, without explicitly teaching the rule. Koshi (1996) performed a study on the effects of consciousness raising through Socratic Questioning, which could also be considered a guided inductive approach. She found that the method led to improved grammar awareness. She also noticed that this style of learning led the learners to take learning beyond the classroom and use more inductive learning in meetings with language in the real world. The positive effect of the technique could be seen to trigger Reciprocal Reinforcement (English, 2014), where by learner investment triggers returns and returns in turn trigger investment. Comprehensible input triggers comprehensible output to build deeper understanding of the target structures.

There are conflicting views on explicit versus implicit instruction. Some theories such as Krashen's zero interface (1982) and Corder's internal syllabus (1967) suggest that all that is necessary for acquiring a language is simply to be exposed to enough comprehensible input leading to implicit learning when the learner is ready. However, other researchers propose the need for learners to notice the forms of a language for input to be comprehensible. Ellis (1984) stated that adults may require explicit explanation to facilitate their acquisition. DeKeyser's (2007) view on Skill Acquisition Theory supports this in stating that first the learner must understand the rules of the language and have explicit knowledge. Secondly, they proceduralize the rules through practice and form-meaning mapping. Finally, the structure becomes automatized and implicit meaning that the learner can use it fluently. DeKeyser adopts a strong-interface position, meaning through practice explicit knowledge can become implicit. Despite the confliction of these theories, many researchers agree that some methods of explicit instruction, or paying attention to the various forms of the target second language can assist adult language learning (Dekeyser, 1998; Norris and Ortega, 2000).

Traditionally grammar was taught explicitly using a deductive approach, the grammar translation method. The instructor would teach the rules of the target structure before allowing the students to practice using it. This method is still vastly employed in the Japanese school system. Sato (1986) states that since Japanese EFL students have little exposure to English or need to use it for communication in their daily lives it is essential to reconsider the deductive PPP (Present Practice Produce) approach in favour of more communicative and inductive approaches.

Form-focused instruction (FFI) creates social contexts for learners to establish their identities as L2 learners leading to greater investment in L2 communication (Tomita and Spada, 2013). Many ESL researchers now consider the best approach for teaching grammar is to bring the student's attention to the grammar structure and forms in a communicative context. Focus on Form (FonF) is a teaching approach that has learners attend to linguistic elements during a communicative activity. Theories supporting FonF are Limited Processing Capacity (VanPatten, 1990). The desired outcome of FonF is that learners notice forms and meanings so that input becomes intake. The reasoning is that when learners are pushed to stretch their linguistic resources, they are forced into using more syntactic processing, they notice elements in the target language and modify their output. Supporters of FonF claim that students will view themselves as communicators and language as the tool for communication.

Focus on FormS (FonFS) is an approach involving teaching discrete linguistic structures. The technique involves non-communicative and non-authentic tasks. This approach sees the students as language learners and the language as the object of study. After the explicit teaching of the linguistic element, the learner must perform an exercise, such as matching the language to its meaning or completing a gap fill activity to display understanding of the meaning and form. This approach requires less cognitive thinking from learners and hence is less likely to create long lasting knowledge.

Deduction involves learners moving from general to more specific thinking processes. It involves the learner taking part in language practice following explicit explanation of a rule. In contrast, in inductive learning the learners' thinking process moves from more specific to more general. The language learner is exposed to examples of the target form and consequentially patterns and generalizations emerge (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Research comparing the effectiveness of deductive and inductive instruction on the acquisition of direct object pronouns in French as a second language (Erlam, 2003) showed a significant advantage for deductive instruction. Robinson (1996) conducted a study to test whether, learning simple and complex second language rules was better assisted by implicit, incidental rule-search (inductive instruction) or deductive instruction. The result showed that implicit learners did outperform other learners on complex rules but instructed learners outperformed the deductive learning group on learning simple rules.

Vogel et al. (2011) produced research in favor of inductive learning by comparing an inductive and deductive approach on the learning of grammar in the intermediate-level college French classroom. The inductive approach involved the presentation of the

target structure followed by the participants and the instructor collaborating on the co-construction of the grammatical rule. The instructor assisted induction of the rule with instructor formulated guided questions. Their findings showed that a guided inductive approach had a significantly greater effect on short term learning, although students seemed to prefer the deductive approach. Koshi (1996) used higher order, critical thinking (Socratic questions) to help learners discover relevant grammar rules inductively. Socratic questions ask how and why instead of what, for example: *How does the writer indicate the time of action? Or why does the writer use this form in this context?* The concept is that these type of higher level questions promote higher level answers. The results of the study showed that by paying selective attention to particular structural forms and answering critical thinking questions, students were able to discover selective grammatical rules inductively. She proposed that this grammar awareness would assist grammar learners to take their grammar learning beyond the classroom and that learners enjoyed improving their analytical thinking ability. Therefore I hypothesize that the instruction of grammar should allow the learner to make connections using their own critical thinking, as much as possible, because this leads to long lasting knowledge of the grammar rules, subsequently acquisition and finally grammatical competence. Connectionism states that we all have the ability to perform vast statistical analysis of language exemplars in order to make connections between form and meaning. Our minds have the computational tools for exploring the conditions under which emergent properties arise.

3. Research Questions

1. How can a guided inductive approach be successfully employed to teach the first and second conditionals leading to clear understanding of the grammar rule?
2. How effective is a guided inductive learning process in facilitating a Japanese adult learner's engagement in L2 conversation?

4. Method and the Project Participant

The participant of this study was a Japanese female in her late twenties. For the purpose of this study she will be called by the alias Maki. Maki has studied English since junior high school, but not consistently. Altogether she says she has studied English for approximately ten years. Since leaving school she has studied English at a language/cram school having a weekly lesson for one year, paid for by her company.

She has also had one-hour private lessons inconsistently for the past two years, approximately every two or three weeks. She works for a large international clothing retailer and currently works as a visual merchandiser. As an international company it employs foreign workers and she has some opportunities to use English for communication with co-workers. However, due to her lack of confidence she says she often falls back on simplified Japanese or gestures to overcome language barriers as they occur in her workplace.

After initial assessment, her overall English proficiency level is low intermediate. Whilst she has a relatively high vocabulary and grounding of basic grammar knowledge, her main issues are a lack of confidence and fluency to use more complex grammar structures, as well as accuracy when using the simple grammar patterns she knows. When she is given thinking time, allowance to confirm the question and her reply, she can produce speech output in the L2. However, her language is not automatized, preventing her from speaking and writing fluently and confidently.

I decided a guided inductive approach would be an interesting and new approach to use in order to help the learner acquire the first and second conditionals grammar structure. Maki had explained she had never used this approach of language learning before. She had been taught the first and second conditionals in high school using a traditional deductive approach, where the rule had been explicitly explained to her. However Maki had said that she did not clearly understand and found it very difficult to use the structures due to the use of would and past tenses to discuss present and future points in time. I hypothesized that a guided inductive approach could assist Maki to perform critical thinking and inductively discover the relationships between form and meaning, which make up the grammatical rules of the first and second conditionals. Where the deductive teaching approach that had been employed by her high school teachers had failed to help her fully comprehend the rule, perhaps a guided inductive approach would help her make long lasting connections between form and meaning that could help her acquire the grammar structure.

5. Procedures

In this section I explain the rationale and method of measuring the learner's ability to use the first and second conditional both before and after the treatment. The student was given a pre-test one week before the treatment, which included twenty questions, ten using the first conditional and ten using the second conditional. The questions were

blank fill questions where the student was given the base form of the verb in brackets and had to write the verb in the correct form to complete the conditional sentence. The ability to write the verb in the correct form shows understanding of the grammar rule, which was the main aim of the teaching treatment. One week after the treatment the student was given a post-test, which was constructed in exactly the same way but featuring new sentences. These test results were compared to see if the learner had made improvements in understanding of the grammar structure and subsequently the ability to use it accurately. The data was analyzed to see if the learner has made any substantial gains in understanding and accurate use of the grammatical point following the treatment. A post-treatment questionnaire was given to the student to ask how she felt the treatment had improved her English and about her general feelings about the treatment as an affective learning practice.

A guided inductive approach was employed to teach the first and second conditional structures across four one hour sessions spaced one week apart. First I presented the structure to the student in the form of examples, which would serve as exemplars of the grammatical rule of each conditional. Whilst looking at the examples I asked guided consciousness raising questions to assist the student in understanding the correct form and meaning of the structure. The hope is that the learners meta-linguistic consciousness will be raised to assist her in understanding the meaning of the example sentences and the purpose for which, the grammatical structure is used in English. This was followed by communicative production activities, where the student had to produce individual output in the target structure. The learner will be asked to complete communicative tasks which involve both receptive input skills such as listening and reading along with productive output tasks such as speaking and writing. Focus on Form S style gap fill or multiple choice exercises were set as homework so the learner could continue practice of the structure, to help support understanding, retention and proceduralization of the declarative knowledge between the weekly sessions. The first treatment will focus on the first conditional, the second treatment will focus on the second conditional, the third and fourth treatments will focus on comparing and contrasting the two in order to understand the different meanings, uses and grammatical rules for forming the two structures.

6. Treatment 1

- 1.) I showed first conditional sentences to Maki in written form:

I hope England win the European Championship this summer and If England win the European Championship this summer, I will be happy

Whilst looking at the sentences I asked her guided inductive questions such as:

Why is the word *will* used in the second half of the second sentence?

Has this football tournament finished yet?

Are England definitely going to win?

How will I feel if they win?

Are the two sentences different?

- 2.) Next I asked Maki to make a list of five future hopes and the possible results if these hopes came true. I showed her my examples.

I then made the sentence: *If I graduate I'll be able to find the job I want*. I made similar first conditionals sentences for my other hopes and their possible consequences. I asked Maki to do the same.

- 3.) After this I showed her a table, which had students' names and their current grades and a blank column for their grade the following year.

Whilst looking at the table I asked her these questions:

What will happen if Sayaka passes her final exam?

What will happen if Sayaka fails her final exam?

What will happen if Sayaka does so well she skips a grade next year?

This concluded our first session and Maki was given an FonFS style gap fill assignment for homework to continue practicing the first conditional.

7. Treatment 2

- 1.) Maki was presented exemplar sentences such as these:

If I was rich I would buy a house.

If I was a professor people would respect me.

Whilst looking at the sentences I asked guided inductive, consciousness raising and Socratic questions such as these:

Am I rich now?

Is it likely I will be rich tomorrow? How likely (give a percentage)?

Why do I want to be rich?

Why do I want to be a professor?

- 2.) Following this I asked Maki to list five current facts she is unhappy about and the result of that situation. I gave her my examples. Next I made the sentence:

If I could speak fluent Japanese, I would be able to make lots of Japanese friends.

I asked Maki to make similar sentences using her own examples.

- 3.) I asked Maki the question, why would or wouldn't you like to be a lion? I repeated for ten animals. I gave her my example answer for the lion question. I would like to be a lion because if I was a lion, I would be strong.
- 4.) In the next activity I asked Maki to imagine she was a famous contemporary person, if she was that person what would she do/ what would the result be? Maki was asked to produce five of her own examples. This concluded the second treatment and this time Maki was given a second conditional FonFS multiple choice exercise to complete as homework.

8. Treatment 3

- 1.) Maki was presented with two examples; example A (an exemplar of the first conditional and example B (an exemplar of the second conditional). Whilst looking at the examples I asked guided inductive questions:
- 2.) I asked Maki to finish sentences using both the first and second conditionals. I asked her to identify which sentences were similar to example A and which sentences were similar to example B from the first part of the treatment and to explain to why.
- 3.) Next I asked Maki if she knew of any popular songs, which used conditional grammar structures. Together we looked at the lyrics of the song and discussed the meaning. This session ended with me giving her an FonFS style gap fill exercise, which featured both the first and second conditional.

9. Treatment 4

- 1.) I presented Maki with more exemplars of the first and second conditionals and asked more guided inductive questions. Here are two examples:

Example 1: If you understand and can use this grammar I will be happy.

Questions: Can you understand this grammar?

Do I know you understand it?

Can you use it?

Do I know you can use it?

Do you think you will remember the rules?

Can you explain the rules?

Example 2: If I found a wallet on the floor, I'd give it to the police.

Questions: How often do people find wallets on the floor?

Do I know I will find one later?

When is this sentence talking about?

Is it talking about a real event that has happened or will definitely happen?

What tenses does it use and why?

- 2.) The second part of this lesson focused on discussion based around what Maki would do if she moved to Nagoya (she had been told she had the choice to accept a promotion, which would mean a transfer to Nagoya). We tried to discuss the possible consequences using the first conditional. We also discussed what she would do if she found a wallet on the street and what she would do if she could time travel using the second conditional. The objective was to raise her consciousness of the difference between the two conditionals. The first being used to describe the possible outcomes of future events and the second being used to discuss hypothetical or unrealistic situations and their results. Once again, his session ended with me giving her an FonFS style gap fill exercise, which featured both the first and second conditional.

10. Results

Figure 1 shows a graph, which presents the results of the pre-test and post tests, where Maki had to use both the first and second conditionals.

Figure 1 shows that in the pre-test Maki got 50% of the first conditional questions correct and 70% of the second conditional questions current. Her knowledge of and ability to use the second conditional was stronger. The post test results showed significant improvement in her ability to use both structures. She made 20% gains in both results. The results show that the guided inductive treatment was successful in improving her ability to use the forms in the short term.

Figure 2 shows the results of a post treatment questionnaire that was given to Maki. The questionnaire asked her how she felt the treatment had improved her English and about her general thoughts of the treatment.

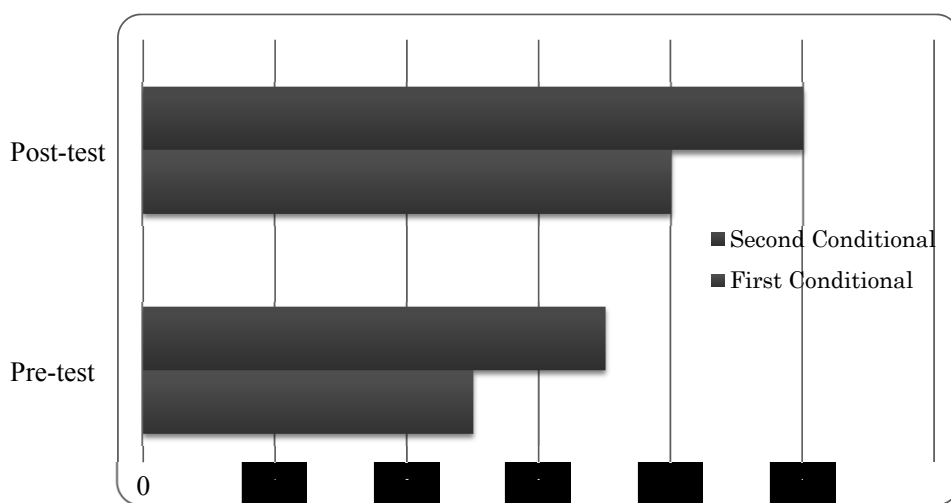


Figure 1: Results of the pre-test and post-test

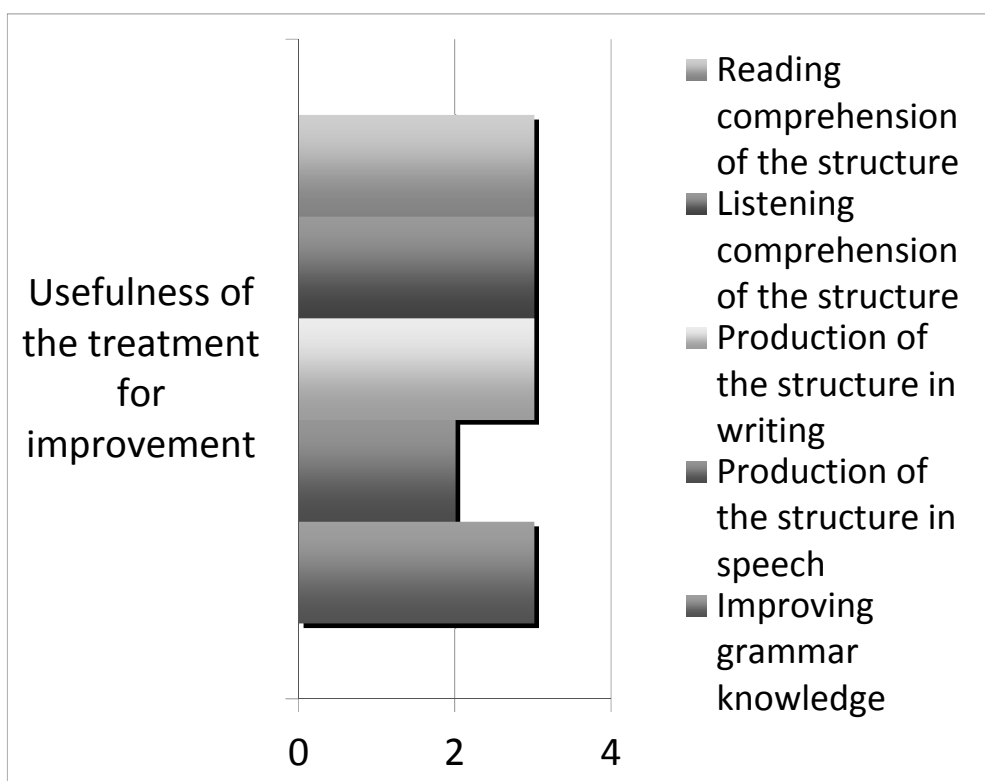


Figure 2: Student questionnaire about the usefulness of the treatment

1 = I got worse, 2 = not useful, 3 = useful, 4 = very useful, 5 = extremely useful

Figure 2 shows that Maki felt the treatment had been useful in improving her reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing production and improving her grammar knowledge (all relating to the target grammar structures). However, she did not feel it had improved her ability to produce the target grammar structures in speech. She said that she was still not confident enough to use the structure in her everyday life, for example when speaking English to her foreign co-workers. She felt that she needed much more practice using the structure in speech. Interesting comments Maki made in the post-test questionnaire include that she found the structure very difficult to comprehend before the treatment but that now she was able to understand. She said that though this style of learning was completely new to her she enjoyed it a lot and would like to continue using it in the future. She felt it might be useful to employ this learning approach when studying determiners such as *another*, *other* and *some others*, (a grammar structure she does not currently understand and is unable to comprehend as input or produce as output). One comment Maki made, which should be noted, is that she felt she wanted more practice producing the structure in speech and so perhaps if this approach is used, more time needs to be spent on communicative activities that allow the learner to produce the structure more as output in the form of speech.

11. Discussion and Conclusions

It is possible to conclude from this study that a guided inductive approach can assist learners in comprehending the meaning and form of L2 grammar structures such as the first and second conditional. Focus on form was helpful for the learners' language acquisition. Schmidt (1994) has stated that there is no learning if there is no conscious attention to form and how it affects meaning. This study showed that learners can be guided to pay attention to certain language forms and discover the way they affect meaning.

The results also indicate that the process can be enjoyable for the learner, despite their not being used to this instructional approach. Japanese learners such as Maki are more used to the deductive instructional approach used in Japanese schools. This is usually a rote learner technique, where the learner is given the answers. One might assume that the inductive approach might put pressure on the learner to think cognitively and discover the rule, which in turn could increase learner anxiety. However, this was not the case in this study. The guided inductive approach created a low-pressure learning environment for the learner. She quickly became accustomed to

the process and enjoyed the treatment. Whilst the learner claimed she does not feel confident to produce the structure yet in speech. It is possible to assume, now this knowledge is explicit it can become implicit through communicative practice according to skill-learning theory (DeKeyser, 1998) or through noticing and consciousness raising (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). Through explicit language focused instruction language learners can acquire formulaic expressions and rule-based competence.

The results show that the student was able to retain the knowledge and ability one week after the end of the treatment, however I would like to conduct a delayed post-test to ascertain whether the knowledge and ability could be retained one month after the end of the treatment. The results of a test such as this would help indicate if a guided inductive approach is effective in creating long lasting knowledge of the grammar structure. I would also like to teach the same grammatical structure in a four lesson deductive teaching treatment with the same pre and post tests in order to compare and contrast the effectiveness of the two approaches deductive and guided inductive instruction.

12. Limitations

This study raises questions such as, is the inductive approach being used to its full potential by English teachers in different teaching contexts. Perhaps the approach could be effectively used in Japanese schools to increase learner comprehension of grammar structures, such as the conditionals. Which is more effective the deductive or inductive teaching approach? Whilst some research has been done to compare the effectiveness of the two, the results are inconclusive and more research needs to be conducted in this area before conclusions can be made. Can this approach be used with all L2 learners? This study was conducted with an adult learner of intermediate English ability but more research needs to be done to see if it can be used with children for example or learners of lower English proficiency. The main question, which goes unanswered, is whether inductively learned knowledge is longer lasting than deductively learned knowledge and I feel this is an important area of research for the second language acquisition field.

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Received on November 27, 2016.